

Global Education Meet (GEM) Kerala 2016

Kovalam Declaration on Making Kerala a Hub of International Education

The Government of Kerala and the Kerala State Higher Education Council organized, with the support of the Federation of Chamber of Commerce and Industry, a Global Education Meet at Kovalam, Kerala, on 29-30 January, 2016, which brought together over a hundred academicians, academic administrators and education providers from around the world.

The Meet, having debated various aspects relating to enhancing the international collaboration of Higher Education Institutions in Kerala, for establishing an Academic City and International Higher Academic Zones, in five sessions over 2 days, has agreed to issue the following Declaration as the consolidated outcome of the Global Education Meet 2016.

The Global Education Meet 2016

Noting that there is a considerable increase in the number of students going abroad from India and other developing countries to developed countries in pursuit of higher education,

Acknowledging that international education has immense potential to enhance employability of students, improve their economic situation and help them to become world-class entrepreneurs.

Taking into consideration the high cost of international education, which allows only stake holders from affluent families to afford the same,

Considering that a large proportion of the students who go abroad do not return to India and are thus unable to contribute to our growing economy with their skills,

Understanding that the Make in India, Digital India and other campaigns of the Government of India will benefit from an internationally trained workforce, which is able to establish and work in state-of-the-art-facilities,

Expressing concern that there is no support system for economically and socially backward students to benefit from the opportunities for international education,

Acknowledging that India itself could be an attractive destination for higher education for students from many developing countries, particularly in Asia and Africa,

Taking into account the fact that the private sector has played a big role in expanding educational facilities in Kerala within the existing policy framework,

Noting that the Government of India is reported to have proposed to establish ten private universities with substantial institutional freedom to design curriculum and implement academic innovations,

Addressing the need to strengthen interdisciplinary learning and research skills into the curriculum

Considering that Universities and educational institutions in Kerala have already established a number of international collaboration programmes for student exchange, faculty exchange and research with universities abroad,

Noting that the Government of Kerala, in its budget for the year 2015-16 announced its intention to establish an Academic City and International Higher Academic Zones in Kerala,

Taking note of the success made by Academic cities in the Middle East and South East Asia to attract international universities to establish their campuses in those countries,

Appreciating that a number of individuals and institutions from Kerala have expressed interest in investing in International Higher Academic Zones,

Recalling that the UN Sustainable Development Goals calls for greater efforts for international co-operation on education,

Taking into account that KSHEC has identified infrastructure, use of technology, teachers' training, research, autonomy and internationalization as areas for immediate attention in shaping a "Higher Education 2.0" for the twenty-first century and has submitted 17 reports to the Government with appropriate recommendations,

Noting that the Government of Kerala has constituted an International Relations Group (IRG) to promote cooperation between the Universities in Kerala and foreign Universities,

Acknowledging that KSHEC has framed an IT@Colleges Programme to improve connectivity in colleges,

Noting that the Kerala State Higher Education Council has submitted a report, recommending that private universities should be established,

Taking note of the Thiruvananthapuram Declaration (www.kshec.gov.in) of the Meet on Transnational Education 2014, which contains valuable recommendations for promoting internationalization of higher education,

Noting with appreciation the initiative taken by the Government of Kerala to continue with its effort to promote internationalization of education by calling a Global Education Meet, which provided a platform for all participants to understand and deliberate on the opportunities and challenges posed by technology-enabled transnational education,

Noting that the present procedure for academic travel is cumbersome and not conducive to faculty and student exchanges,

Taking note of the fact that China has the third largest foreign student population in the world and it is the country that sends out the largest number students abroad,

Requests

- 1) *The Government of India* to finalize the Higher Education Bill so that a long term legislative framework for international co-operation on education is available for educational providers to make long term financial commitments needed for international academic co-operation;

- 2) *The Government of India* to facilitate international student exchanges by increasing the number of fellowships available for cultural exchange programmes as well as rationalizing legislation to make students entry procedures easier;

- 3) *The Government of India* to relax legislation regarding short term employment of faculty and researchers from other countries in India which is urgently needed for the smooth functioning of the International Higher Academic Zones and other academic collaboration;

- 4) *The Government of India* to ensure massification of education with equity;

- 5) *The Government of India* to liberalize its visa regime to facilitate academic mobility;
- 6) *The Government of India* to liberalize academic travel and to eliminate red tapism in dealing with request for travel.
- 7) *Acknowledges* the pioneer efforts of International Institute for Scientific and Academic Collaboration to facilitate two batches of American students for a semester each in the University of Kerala and encourages the institute and the University of Kerala to expand and strengthen the programme.
- 8) *The Government of Kerala* to set up an Academic City Authority as a facilitator-cum-regulator for the bodies proposed to be established to promote internationalization of higher education in Kerala;
- 9) *To transform the research landscape in the state, including through partnerships with industries and maximize the benefits of research by advancing fundamental knowledge to contribute much to the society at large;*
- 10) *To harness and align different knowledge domains* and thus create Centres of Excellence which combine inquiry and investigation;
- 11) *The University Grants Commission* to urgently streamline procedures and support for facilitating international collaboration so that all institutions desirous of establishing such co-operation can do that within the shortest possible time;
- 12) *The All India Council for Technical Education* and other apex bodies on higher education in India to establish procedures for international recognition of Indian degrees and vice versa so as to promote internationalization of higher education India;

13) *Requests to create an environment for blended learning* which will integrate online materials, traditional classroom teaching and online virtual classrooms;

14) *The Government of Kerala* to finalize legislation on establishment of an Academic City and International Higher Academic Zones so as to give a boost to internationalization of education in the state;

15) *The Government of Kerala* to initiate work to identify locations for an Academic City and to approve the locations for International Higher Academic Zones as identified by academic providers so that individuals and institutions desirous of partnering can start to prepare their plans;

16) *The Government of Kerala* to make available procedures and incentives for faculty and students in the Academic City and International Higher Academic Zones;

17) *The Government of Kerala* to implement the report of the KSHEC on establishing private universities in Kerala at the earliest;

18) *The Government of Kerala* to ensure that economically and socially weaker sections of the society have access to the new institutions, courses and opportunities created in the Academic City and International Higher Academic Zones;

19) *The Government of Kerala* to establish procedures which will ensure gender equality in access to the new institutions, courses and opportunities created in the Academic City and International Higher Academic Zones;

20) *The Kerala State Higher Education Council* to arrange training programmes for managers of higher educational institutions in Kerala on legal and practical aspects of establishing international collaboration, including student and faculty exchange;

21) *The Department of Higher Education, Government of Kerala*, to support educational institutions in the state to establish hundred percent high speed connectivity with data network in every academic institution so that students can benefit from technologically enhanced learning on the basis of the report on IT@Colleges;

22) *The Universities in the state* to revise their rules and regulations to facilitate exchange of faculty, student and researchers locally, nationally and internationally in a seamless manner;

23) *The Universities in the state* to urgently establish easy and transparent procedures for international academic credit recognition to support student exchange programmes;

24) *The Universities in the state* to take full advantage of technologically enhanced learning by promoting Massive Open Online Courses, flipped classrooms and blended learning in their universities;

25) *The Academic institutions in the state, both in public sector and private sector*, to start to work on international collaborations for teaching, research, student and faculty exchange so as to get familiarized with international co-operation which will be greatly expanded in the coming years;

26) *The Public and Private Sector Companies in Kerala* to consider contributing in higher education including research as part of their corporate social responsibility to contribute to a sustainable state;

27) *The Individuals and companies owned and promoted by Indians abroad* to invest in the Academic City and International Higher Academic Zones in Kerala;

28) *The faculty* members in academic institutions in the state to proactively engage international academic community for collaborative research, teaching and student exchange to maximize internationalization of curriculum and educational experience;

29) *The student community in the state* to see the internationalization of higher education as a huge opportunity to be exposed to higher education of global standards, which will improve their ability to pursue higher education and research;

30) *The student community* to take advantage of internationalization of education as a way to maximize their employability locally and globally;

31) *The educational providers in Kerala* to leverage Kerala's reputation as a family friendly and economical global tourist destination to market their capacity to deliver quality higher education at affordable costs across the developing world in order to attract more international students to come to Kerala and increase diversity in classrooms;

32) Considers that good governance of educational institutions is required to ensure quality, efficiency and transparency.

The participants of the Global Education Meet further resolve

To continue the discussions individually in coming days in their respective countries, academic forums and educational institutions they represent, to harness the potential of internationalization of education;

To promote, in their respective countries and spheres of influence, the relevant conclusions from the Thiruvananthapuram Declaration(www.kshcec.kerala.gov.in) on Transnational Education 2014 and the Kovalam Declaration of the Global Education Meet 2016.

The participants of the Global Education Meet further request

The Kerala State Higher Education Council to widely publicize the Kovalam Declaration on International Education so that students, teachers, academic policy makers, education providers and other stakeholders of higher education can use it as a basic document to advocate and promote transnational education.

The participants noted with concern the undue anxieties in certain sections about internationalization of Higher Education because of a lack of understanding of the concept and expressed the hope that dissent will not degenerate in to violence.

The participants of the Global Education Meet express appreciation for the Government of Kerala for the excellent arrangements for the Meet and for its generous hospitality.

Issued in Kovalam, on 30th January 2016.